

Revelation

Preached by Phil Kayser at DCC on 2021-04-11

Introduction

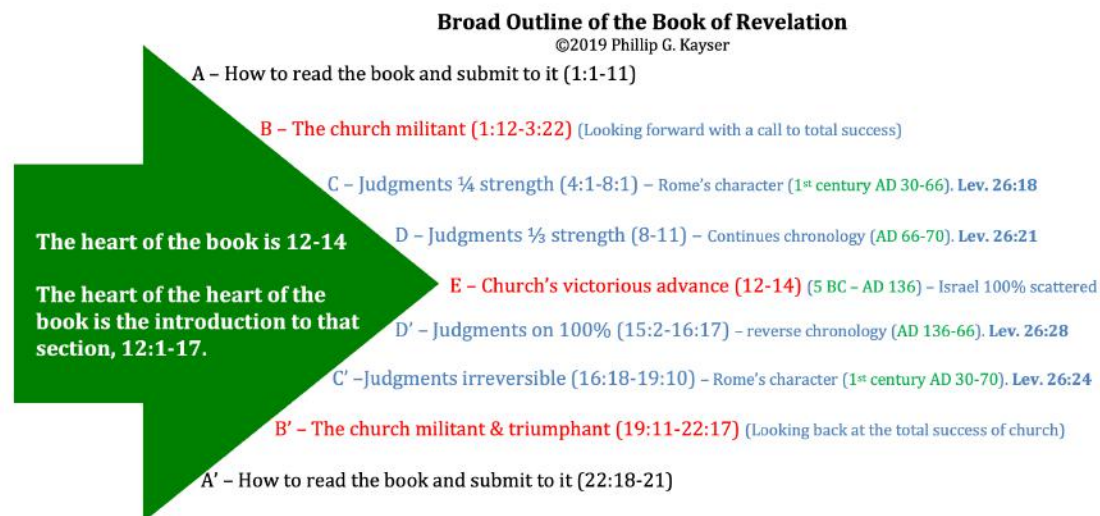
Well, we are finally diving into the last book of the Bible. And what an amazing book it is. In my previous series on this book we saw that it is amazing in the complexity and beauty of its structure. The minimalistic outline that I put into your bulletins does not do the book justice. Even the fuller outline does not. It is probably the most intricately structured book of the Bible with beautiful substructures woven throughout.

It is also amazing in how much of the Old Testament is crammed into this little book. Beale, Carson, and Van der Waal demonstrate rather conclusively that there are at least 1000 clear allusions to the Old Testament, and more recent computer research shows upwards of 1500 parallels and allusions. And the bottom line is that you cannot *fully* understand this book without being immersed in the Old Testament.

But it is amazing on so many other levels. It is amazing how many topics it has crammed into 22 chapters - topics that cover almost every area of life including mathematics, astronomy, cosmology, heart issues, behavior issues, physical warfare, spiritual warfare, music, worship, angelology, demonology, law, grace, and so many other topics.

Brief overview of the book

But today I can only give a bird's eye view. Actually, I'm going to give you two overviews - an airline view and then a much closer bird's eye view. We'll start with the much higher altitude viewpoint by looking at the outline chart on the back of your handout - the one with a green arrow on it.



The first thing you will notice is that the book is constructed as a chiasm, with an ABCDEDCBA structure - each of those letters have parallel themes. Now, I will hasten to say that this chart is an incredibly abbreviated and simplified outline. The fuller outline is so much more complex. But the advantage of this abbreviated outline is that it let's you see the overall flow of the book and the dates of the main events without bogging you down in too much detail.

You can see that the heart of the book is chapters 12-14, which shows the church's victorious advancement from the birth of Jesus until AD 136 when Israel was scattered to the winds. So my preterist approach is quite different from that of most partial preterists - and it completely solves conundrums found in previous approaches. My interpretation takes us way beyond AD 70 and does not end until Israel ends in the disastrous Bar Kochba rebellion, in which three eyewitnesses claimed the blood flowed literally up to the horse's noses. So the red E section starts with the birth of Jesus but shows a church that not only survives the Great Tribulation that leads up to the destruction of the temple, but emerges on the other side of AD 70 to start taking over the world. The end of that central section prophesies a continual harvest of souls to the end of time - a worldwide harvest. It's the end of the first part of the double covenant structure where the book repeats the five points of the covenant twice. So it ends with covenant succession. It prophetically anticipates what the last section describes as having happened from eternity's perspective.

The two A sections are the introduction and the conclusion. And readers hurry over those to their own peril. The reason there are so many false interpretations of Revelation is that people dive right into the exciting stuff later in the book and fail to realize that John has given us incredibly detailed guidance for how to interpret all of these complex symbols. The first A section gives us 33 principles of interpretation and the second A section repeats most of those and adds a few more. If those principles are taken seriously, the rest of the book tends to fall into place.

Both B sections deal with the church. The first B section constitutes Christ's call to the first century church to be a holy church that militantly batters down the strongholds of Satan. That section shows that God has no patience with churches that like the status quo. His command was to conquer or be conquered; advance or you will perish. There are no other options in God's army. So the first B section calls the church to be the church militant and with Christ's presence walking in the midst of the candlesticks (which is the introduction to that section), God gives the church every reason to anticipate the total success of the Great Commission. That's the first B section in a nutshell.

Well, the second B section shows that the Great Commission *will* indeed be fulfilled as anticipated and all nations *will* be converted. It's an incredibly glorious description of the advancement of the church, with the last two chapters being a look backwards from eternity of what the church had accomplished in history. The world that Satan tried to take from Adam is a world that will be wrested out of Satan's hands by Christ, the Second Adam. Hallelujah!

The four C & D sections that are in blue letters focus upon God's judgments on Rome and on Israel. So this is a book of grace, but it is also a book filled with God's judgments. You have a

false view of God if you do not take both sides of His character into account. We call these judgments *redemptive* judgments because even the judgments are used to prepare the elect to submit to Jesus. Though God brings devastation to the enemies of the church, He also redeems many of those enemies and incorporates them into the church. So that's the big picture overview.

More detailed look at the book through the eyes of the chiasm.

The two A sections - How to read the book and submit to it (1:1-11; 22:6-21)

But lets go down to the bird's eye level and pick up some of the details. We will be taking the two parallel sections together again. I've already mentioned that the first 11 verses of the book give us 33 hermeneutical principles that help us to read the book accurately. Because of lack of time, I will just give you a sampling of 9 of those 33 principles.

The first two words are "the revelation." That word "Revelation," or *apokalupsis*, means unveiling something *so that we can see it clearly*. God did not intend this to be a difficult book that obscures the truth. He intended it to be an unveiling or an opening up of truth. Any interpretation that makes this book obscure and hard to understand has missed the boat. First century readers were intended to understand it. It's not about cobra helicopters. It's not about Russia and China - which first century readers wouldn't have a clue about. The first century readers would have immediately known what it meant - especially if they took these introductory principles seriously.

But second, when the curtains are drawn aside (that's the Greek word *apokalupsis*), what is the first thing that we see? We see Jesus Christ - Jesus the Messiah. He is the central subject of history. He is the central vision of the church, the covenant, nations, and of time itself. He is the central vision of this book. Sadly, most commentaries don't make *Him* the central vision; they make the enemies of Christ the central vision. That's what the ten spies did in the book of Numbers - they reported accurate facts, but with the wrong focus. John wants you to stop being discouraged and to fix your eyes on Jesus. So principle #2 says that this is not a book designed to scare the daylights out of us by showing everything that is going wrong. It is a book designed *to focus your attention on what Jesus is doing in history*. It's more about Christ than it is about the antichrist, though it does talk about both. But the antichrist was just a pawn in Christ's hands.

I'll skip principle three. The fourth principle is that this book is not simply intended for experts or academics. This is a revelation designed to be communicated to all of Christ's slaves - which means, you and me. Sadly, many Christians have been scared off from this book because of the crazy ideas that people have imported into it. But God intended this book to encourage the ordinary Jane and Joe. One author said that the whole point of the images in this book was to turn it into a cartoon book that even the youngest person could understand. So even though it does go *very deep* - so deep that it challenges the most

academic person out there, it has much that can easily be understood by a child and can comfort a child.

I'll skip over principles 4 and 5. The sixth principle is that this book deals with history, not just ideas. The first verse of the book says that it speaks of "*things that must occur* shortly." That phrase rules out the theory of Idealism, which denies that this deals with history and claims that it only presents general ideas that are applicable in any time. And while their applications are many times true, this phrase shows that the whole purpose of the book is to show us *things that will occur in time*. It deals with real history.

But that phrase also shows that this book is a *Providential* History. That is seen in the word "must." Who rules history? Where does the determining "must" come from? Some commentaries give you the impression that history is controlled by Satan or by the Illuminati or by some other creaturely force. But this is a history that "*must take place because Jesus Christ is the Lord of history*. Amen? It is a book of comfort that gives us the utmost confidence in Christ's Lordship over history.

The eighth principle can be seen in the word "shortly." That word shows that the bulk of this book deals with events that started to happen within months or even weeks of the book being written. That's true of all seven major sections. And we spent quite a bit of time in our series of sermons on this book distinguishing between the stuff that would happen shortly and the stuff that would be far off. There *are* references to the Second Coming in this book, but the vast majority of the book deals with things in history that *must happen shortly*. Other synonyms of shortly that are sprinkled throughout the book are "soon," "about to," and "near." Those words rule out 95% of the commentaries out there that make the vast majority of the book deal with things that are supposedly two thousand years away. That is hardly shortly, soon, near, or about to happen.

The ninth principle comes from the second sentence in verse 1 - "And He communicated it, sending it by His angel to His slave John." The Greek word for "communicated" refers to a very special kind of communication. It means to communicate by symbols or signs. The New King James more literally translates it, "And He signified it." Or as some like to mispronounce that English word - He sign-ified it. Signified means that He communicated by means of signs, symbols, and figures. This book is jam-packed with symbols that point to something beyond the symbol. Well, this means that understanding the book's symbology is critical.

But (and this is the next principle, which is a very important balance), we also saw that in the Bible, signs that symbolized things were often (if not always) real events in history. So the Bible does not pit signs against real history. The fact that the rock Moses struck in the wilderness was a sign did not mean that it was a fiction story or that it was not also a literal rock in space-time-history. It was. And most of the symbols in this book are symbols that literally happened in history - like the moon turning red. It literally happened, but it was also a symbol of the lights going out for Israel. Israel's coins symbolized Israel's leadership with the moon.

Now, we are almost 2000 years removed from the original audience, so it helps to find out what symbology meant to them. For example, every one of you knows what a donkey and

an elephant symbolize in political cartoons today (that is, if you are American). The donkey is the symbol for the Democratic Party and the Elephant is the symbol for the Republican Party. 2000 years from now if people dug up those cartoons, they would not understand what those symbols meant unless they learned the original context. And we don't have time to define all those symbols today, but we went over the original context which makes every image in the book jump to life. Some of the major symbols were of both Israel and Rome being judged by God. And there are many other sub-symbols.

Principle 12 comes from the word "prophecy." And there are several other indicators that this book was a covenant lawsuit. It was a covenant lawsuit against the church, against Israel, and against Rome. If it was a covenant lawsuit, then it has all the features of Old Testament *prophetic* literature - not the heretical *apocalyptic* literature of the gnostic writings. This is a prophetic book, not an apocalyptic book. As such this book continues to be relevant for every age and every nation. Just as a couple of examples: If Israel was judged by God and cast away despite being in covenant with God, then Christian nations of today can still be judged if they apostatize. We cannot assume that America is exempt. So that would be an application of this principle. Likewise, if God judged Rome for gross violations of His laws even though it was a pagan nation, the application means that God's laws continue to be relevant to all pagan nations and they too will be judged by God's laws. So even though it is rooted in history, its implications are far reaching.

I don't have time in today's sermon to go over all the principles of interpretation that the apostle John lays out, but when you read this book you realize that God wants us to understand the book so that we can obey it (which is another principle found in chapter 1, verse 3). It's not simply a book to satisfy our curiosity. It was intended to change our lives. And in our series we saw the many ways that this book was transformational for every area of life. In any case, the first eleven verses of the book tell us how to read the book, and in case we didn't get it, John repeats himself in the last sixteen verses of the book by once again telling us how to read it. He does not want us to mess up our reading.

The two B sections - the church militant & triumphant (1:12-3:22; 19:11-22:5)

The first B section describes the church militant. Christ has willed to extend His kingdom through the church. Weak as it is, He has chosen to use the church. Whatever happens to nations (they will rise and fall), the church of Jesus Christ will never die. He had promised, "I will build My church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it." It may sustain injuries and it may be corrupted for a time, but this section guarantees that the church will never fail. Why? The introduction to this section tells us. Chapter 1:9-20 shows us that Jesus is walking in the midst of the churches and *He* is always victorious. Look at verse 12-13:

12 And there I turned to see the voice that was speaking with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands, **13** and in the midst of the seven lampstands one like a Son of Man, clothed down to the feet and girded at the chest with a golden belt.

And by the way, each of the major seven sections of this book has an introduction that convinces us to have faith in Jesus. And I can't get into all of the marvelous imagery borrowed from Zechariah 4 on the candlesticks, but at its heart is the need for the Holy Spirit to flow through the church (and the Holy Spirit is symbolized by the olive oil). Over and over John tells each of these churches, "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."

But I will point out that each of these churches is not simply a local church. Each of those cities had several churches already in existence, and even the symbol shows that. In Zechariah it was one candlestick with seven lamps, but here in Revelation it is seven candlesticks, each of which has seven branches and seven lights. So there are 49 lights in Asia Minor. Since each light represents a local congregation, and each lampstand represents the city-presbytery, we are talking about a lot of churches being symbolically represented in chapters 2-3. Now obviously there *is* instruction on what local churches should look like, but there is also much instruction on what presbyteries should look like, and how the whole church should relate to each church covenantally. And by the way, each letter is structured as a covenant document.

But the bottom line is that Jesus is in the midst of those churches cleaning the lamps, trimming the wicks, and intervening in the life of the church to make sure that its light does not go out. He inspects the churches.

And what does He find? He finds that some church presbyteries are doing a good job and others are not doing a good job. So He works with them, brings covenant lawsuits against them, and seeks to bring them to repentance. And by the way, He *was* successful because we know from history that most of these presbyteries grew in holiness, in numbers, and in influence in the Roman empire. They became powerhouses of the Holy Spirit that took on the empire of Rome. But every generation needs to take heed to the instructions given to these seven presbytery churches.

For example, it is very easy for a vibrant ministry to begin to become ministry-focused instead of Christ-focused. That's what happened to the church of Ephesus in chapter 2:1-7. There was a lot of good that the church had done, but it had lost its first love for the Lord.

On the other hand, the churches of Smyrna and Philadelphia in chapter 3, are both testimonies to the fact that a group of churches can be so faithful to the Lord that they do not need His rebuke. That is awesome! We ought to aspire to that - to be able to receive Christ's "Well done, you good and faithful servant." Each of those two churches *did* have trials, and Jesus (their shepherd) shows those two churches how to *navigate* those trials. But they were faithful.

The church of Pergamos was needing rebuke because of some moral compromises that were happening. It kind of reminds me of a lot of denominations in America that have tolerated similar evils.

The church of Thyatira needed rebuke because the moderator was failing to lead his family, and his wife was a Jezebel who was destroying the church. We saw in our series that the Jezebel spirit is very much alive in modern churches.

The church of Sardis, in chapter 3:1-6 had become almost dead in its zeal for the Lord. And the church of Laodicea had become lukewarm and self-sufficient.

There are obviously many other issues that John discusses in connection with these seven presbyteries, but all of them together show that it is impossible to be a faithful church militant if we are not endued from on high with the power of the Holy Spirit.

The second B section does exactly the same thing, but in different language. It begins with a powerful introduction as well (which is all of chapter 19). It shows the church to be up against the enmity of Rome and Israel. The task of the church seems impossible. How can it win the nations? And the answer is, "It can't - apart from Jesus." But with Jesus on our side and in our midst, there is no reason why we cannot fulfill the Great Commission. Look at the imagery in chapter 19, verses 11-16. Christ is the key here just like he was in the first B section. It says,

11 I saw the heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! And the One who sits on it, called Faithful and True, both judges and makes war with righteousness. 12 Now His eyes were a flame of fire and on His head were many diadems, having names written, besides a written name that no one knows except Himself; 13 and He was clothed with a robe that had been baptized with blood, and His name is called The Word of God. 14 And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white, clean, followed Him on white horses. 15 And out of His mouth goes a sharp, two-edged sword, so that with it He may strike the nations. And He Himself will shepherd them with a rod of iron. And He Himself treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God, the Almighty. 16 And He has a name written on His robe, even on His thigh, King of kings and Lord of lords!

Notice it says that He will *shepherd* the nations. That means that eventually the nations are going to become sheep. They will become converted nations. But there is a lot of spiritual warfare that needs to take place before that will happen. And chapter 19 teaches the church to rejoice in the use of imprecatory prayers and to not be afraid of judgments. Those judgments are Christ's means of advancing the kingdom. We need to be ready to pick up the pieces. And we have seen this down through history. Look at the Black Plague that swept across Europe and Russia between 1347 and 1353. It was devastating. Yet Jesus used it to bring multitudes into the kingdom. Look at the Great Plague of London in 1664-65. Plagues, wars, famines, locusts, drought, and even horrible state tyranny (which He talks about a great deal in these two B sections), have all been used over and over again to harvest multitudes into the kingdom. Don't be discouraged by darkness you see out there.

Chapter 20 shows Satan being bound in the pit in AD 70 - at least that is my take on it - that the binding happens after the events of chapter 19. Others take it that he was bound in AD 30. Either way, that binding gives us hope of other demons progressively being bound to the abyss, and the world being Christianized over time. And chapters 21-22 look back from the perspective of eternity to see what the church militant was able to accomplish. 21:26 says, "And they will bring the glory and the honor of the nations into her." There will be such antithesis that "there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb's Book of Life." Eventually the church will be worldwide and will have a high degree of holiness. And at the end of the metaphorical 1000 years, even the universe will be transformed into a beautiful cosmos that has no vestiges of the curse left in it. Chapter 22:3 says, "And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve

Him.” That’s the trajectory of human history. As the hymn, Joy to the World words it, His grace will flow far as the curse is found.

And it is my belief that there will be no final apostasy with Gog and Magog in chapter 20. I can’t go into all the reasons that I gave in my series, but briefly, a final apostasy such as most people envision would contradict numerous Scriptures.¹ Just as one example, Isaiah 2 describes the thorough conversion of all nations in the world. It goes on to say this in verse 4:

They shall beat their swords into plowshares, And their spears into pruning hooks; Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, *Neither shall they learn war anymore.*

On many people’s views of Revelation 20, they do learn war again, but this guarantees that they will never ever ever learn war again. And there are numerous verses that guarantee that Christ will come back to a completely converted and righteous world. Martin Selbrede has a marvelous essay on Matthew 5:18 that shows that heaven and earth cannot end as we know it until every jot and tittle of the law is being fulfilled in the world. I have found his interpretation of “till all is fulfilled” very convincing. It’s the same interpretation that B.B. Warfield gives. When the law is being 100% lived out in this world, there will be nothing left in God’s prophetic plan to put under Christ’s feet, so the *final* event (heaven and earth being purified) can then happen. That interpretation is in perfect harmony with the eschatology of 1 Corinthians 15. Neither passage leaves any room for a final apostasy.

So what does Revelation 20:7-10 mean? Obviously there is going to be a Gog and Magog on earth. But here is how it will happen: that chapter means that when the final resurrection happens, the tares will be resurrected first (as is guaranteed in Matthew 13:30 - it’s not the believers who get resurrected first, but the tares). The non-elect will include Gog and Magog. Those two nations were long ago destroyed with not a survivor left. They do not exist anymore. For them to be here on earth on the final day of history, they have to be resurrected, and the Greek is clear that they come out of the ground in which they were buried. So, having glorified bodies, these unbelievers are deceived by the also-released Satan to try to take over and win. But before they can do much of anything, God judges them. He gathers the goats on his left hand and the sheep on his right, and brings this universe into its purified and eternal state of glory. And thus Isaiah 9:7 is literally correct - that as long as there is history, Christ’s kingdom will continue to grow.

So the second B section is a glorious picture of what we as the church militant should be aiming for. If your target for what you are seeking to achieve is low you will aim low, shoot low, and hit low. According to your faith be it unto you. But if God’s promises grip your heart and you have a big faith, you will be seeking to lay up bricks and materials for the long haul. You will have a long term vision. What I do, I want to last beyond my lifetime. There are various ways you can do that. Investing in your children is one way. Investing in

¹ For example, Is. 2:4; 9:7; 11:9; 66:23; Jer. 31:34; Dan. 2:35; Ps. 37:9-11,22,28,29; 1 Cor. 15:20-28; Rom. 11:12,14,16,25-27; Matt. 5:18; John 1:29; 12:32; 2 Pet. 3:9; Heb. 12:27 with Haggai 2:6-7 - “all nations”; Matt. 6:10; Jer. 31:34; Rom. 5:20-21; Matt. 6:10.

long term strategic ministries like Biblical Blueprints is another way. But Revelation calls upon us to set our vision very high - all members of all nations submitting to King Jesus - just as we last week saw promised in the second half of Psalm 22.

The four C & D sections - Redemptive judgments unleashed upon Israel and Rome (4-11; 15:2-19:10)

So, how exactly should we operate in a world filled with sin and with judgments? And that is the subject matter of the bulk of the book - chapters 4-11 are the first C and D sections, and chapter 15:2-19:10 are the second C & D sections. Some people are scared to death by the gory judgments outlined in those sections. But two things need to be kept in mind that will help us to approach life with faith rather than fear.

First, we saw in our series that every detail of every one of those prophecies was fulfilled to a T in the years AD 30-136.

Second, every one of those four sections has an introduction that sets the tone for those judgments. And there is a very logical historical progress in the first C & D sections and then historically moving backwards just like the chiasm moves backwards. And these four sections cover such a massive amount of material, that there is no way that I can do it justice. Our bird's eye view is going to fly fairly fast.

The two C sections - the character of Rome; how Christ uses Rome to judge Israel and to advance His kingdom. Introductions (4-5; 16:18-21) and Judgments (6-7; 17:1-19:10)

The two C sections of the book show God's judgments between AD 30 and 70. And both sections show why Rome and Israel are such lousy savors. Both had grown into tyrannical states and both were in bed with each other in persecuting Christians. So these two C sections paint a rather bleak picture of civil government. By the time you are done reading those, you don't trust the civil government to solve much of anything. For sure you don't trust the civil government to be involved in banking (condemned in these passages), printing of money (condemned in these passages), controlling farming, shipping, and commerce (also condemned in these passages). As you see the many things that civil governments illegitimately sought to control, they teach us to have a healthy distrust for civic involvement in those things in any age. This is a book that teaches us about good and bad civics. Unless a civil government is Christian and submits to God's laws, it is automatically influenced by demons and is not to be trusted much further than you can throw it.

In contrast, much of Classical Education idealizes the Roman Republic as if it was good. This book does not. Each of the riders of the four horses of the Apocalypse were demon princes who were allowed by God to possess and control the emperors of Rome.

The rider of the white horse in chapter 6:2 controlled Tiberius.

The demon-rider of the red horse in verses 3-4 controlled the next emperor, Caligula, and made him astonishingly corrupt.

The demon-rider of the green horse of verses 5-6 controlled Claudius. Many modern people see Claudius as an enlightened emperor who was trying to be fair - and thus verse 5 shows him with a pair of scales in his hand. Interestingly, the coins minted by Emperor Claudius shows him with a pair of scales in his hand. He thinks he protested his fairness too much because he cheated the people by debasing the money with copper, and thus the horses on his coins turned green. His statist intervention (even if you impute good intentions to him) led to massive disruptions in the market, which led to famine. Historians have demonstrated that. The Mises institute has documented the horrible results in ancient civilizations of the very policies America is engaging in. They miserably failed. Why? Because they are not God's way. By the way, I showed in our series how every description of these emperors was perfectly pictured by the coins that that emperor minted. If you had coins in your pocket in the first century, there would be no mistaking which emperor was being described in each seal. And I didn't have space in your handouts to show the green horse and all that kind of stuff.

The fourth horse in the fourth seal of chapter 6 had two riders - and both of those demons are pictured on Nero's coins. The names are exactly the same. It portrays the first stage of Nero's reign. But ultimately, this book is about the *demons* who stand behind flesh and blood. According to this book, you are naive if you think you can successfully manipulate politics better than demons can. Nothing but God's grace can make civil governments good; nothing. That's why I never vote for a Christian no matter how conservative he is. Claudius was a conservative. So was Tiberius. The other two were progressives. All were controlled by demons.

The second C section covers parallel themes about the awfulness of demonically controlled civil governments. Chapters 17-18 describe Rome and Israel persecuting the saints just like they did in the first C section. And it paints the civil governments of both Rome and Israel as demonic to the core. That's parallel. The beast of Revelation 17 comes up out of the abyss. He is a demon, and that beast makes every emperor take on his demonic characteristics. The Beast first possessed Nero, then Vespasian, and then Titus before the Beast was cast into hell.

And the harlot who rides that beast is Israel. So even though *in history* the second C goes 3 years beyond the first C section, its themes are parallel.

So let's look at that seductive second figure, which represents Israel. John paints Israel as a harlot who rides on the scary beast. How on earth did that happen? Well, through international banking, the leadership of Israel powerfully influenced and directed the beast during the time of Nero. The banking influence actually started much earlier, but it was especially strong under Nero. Nero converted to Judaism (according to the Talmud), had a Jewish wife, and filled his court with Jewish advisors. And because of that influence, Israel used Rome to try to exterminate the church. Both nations were behind the Great Tribulation that almost wiped out Christianity. But scary as that was, the book makes clear that God was in control. And in chapter 18 God caused the beast to get upset with the harlot

who rode him and the beast destroyed Israel in the outpouring of God's great wrath. In the series we got into all of the details - such as the literal mark of the beast on the hands and forehead from AD 70-74, the demonic miracles, and many other historical details. Today I am flying fast to show the contours of the book.

But I will spend a bit of time on one of the passages that most people are extremely skeptical could have happened in the first century. It is the sixth seal in chapter 6:12-17. Let's read that.

12 And I saw, just when He opened the sixth seal—there was a severe earthquake, and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became like blood. 13 And the stars of heaven fell to the earth, like a fig tree drops its late figs when shaken by a strong wind. 14 And the sky was split, like a scroll being rolled up, and every mountain and island was moved out of its place. 15 And the kings of the earth and the magnates and the generals and the rich and the mighty, and every slave and every free man, hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains. 16 And they said to the mountains and the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! 17 Because the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?"

In our series we saw that every tiny detail of this was indeed perfectly fulfilled in May of AD 66. And the text makes clear that a lot of history happens after these events. It is not the last day of history as so many commentaries erroneously state. It was simply a powerful warning of things to come.

For example, it talks about a great earthquake. How great was this earthquake that happened in May of AD 66? In the Revelation series I gave documentation from various science journals dealing with tsunamis, earthquakes, history, and archeology. And we saw that this earthquake was so massive that it moved every land mass in the entire Mediterranean region by several feet. They estimate the average upheaval was 6.66 meters and in one place the land moved upwards 9.9 meters. 9.9 meters is 32.48 foot rise. The history shows how terrifying this literal moving of every island and mountain was, with its accompanying tsunamis.

What about the stars falling to the earth? No commentary believes it is stars as we think of stars, since they are millions of times bigger than the earth. In the Bible, stars also refers to meteorite showers. And I quoted eyewitness accounts of meteorites falling, of a sudden blackening out of the sun, of chariots in the sky, and of the appearance of a huge man in the sky that was leading armies and that struck terror into the hearts of the witnesses. Both Roman and Jewish eyewitnesses saw Jesus in the sky leading His armies. I can't get into the details, but every detail of the signs, wonders, persecutions, and other things in these C sections happened to a T in the first century. We know the dates.

The point is, when you are going through trials and tribulations like those first century Christians were, it would be easy to wonder if God was in control. But Revelation is written in such a way that we are convinced that Jesus controls the meteorites, plagues, fire, hail, volcanoes, poisonings of underground cisterns, and other details that we looked at. When hail hits your roof, it is not an accident. God is sovereign. Jesus reigns over these and uses them to advance His kingdom. Hallelujah!

That's why each of the seven sections of the book begins with an introduction that shows this power and victorious grace. I'll just illustrate with the introduction to the first C section. Please turn back to chapter 4. I know we are jumping around a little bit within the C sections, but hopefully I am doing it in a way to really capture their meaning. Chapters 4-5 are the introduction to the first C section. Chapter 4:1 calls John in a vision up into heaven to see what God's command center looks like. And yes, God's throne is not an irrelevant feature of an ethereal something. God rules the universe in every detail from this throne room. Anyway, look at verse 1.

4:1 After these things I looked and behold - a door standing open in the heaven...

The "after these things" shows that John is now in a new vision. The Greek for "**a door standing open**" (θύρα ἀνεωγμένη) is in the perfect tense, which refers to an action that happened in the past and has an abiding result. So at some point in John's past (in other words, at some point *before* AD 66 when the book was being written) the door was opened and it now enduringly stands open - not just for John, but for all believers to enter "**heaven**" for the remainder of time.

When I preached through the book I showed how saints went to paradise in the heart of the earth prior to Christ's resurrection. It was only after Christ's resurrection that saints went to heaven. That's when this door was opened to humans. In John 3:13 Jesus said, "No one has ascended to heaven." That's an absolute statement - no one. Elijah is not an exception. They all went to paradise in the heart of the earth.

Likewise, prior to Christ, no one could fill the Messianic shoes. In chapter 4 John witnesses the fiery stream that flows from the throne of God and the awesome power that He represents. In chapter 4 God's power is an unquestioned power. But that power can only condemn; it cannot redeem.

In chapter 5:1 God holds up the scroll of the Old Testament, and gives the challenge to any claimant to fulfill the qualifications for the Messiah that were laid out in the Old Testament. The true fulfiller (Jesus alone) would be qualified to reopen the canon of Scripture and to start adding books to it - a big theme of Revelation, with Revelation being the final little book to be added to the big book of the canon. And I can't get into that today. But who will be this promised Messiah?

The Jews had rejected Jesus, so this a challenge: "Who is your replacement that lives up to the rigid conditions of the Messiah?" The apologetic implications of this are obvious. The Talmudists rejected Jesus, but without Jesus there is no redemption possible for them. They just raised up one political leader after another with failure after failure. The last so-called Messiah was Bar Kochba - and his demise is predicted in later chapters. God uses him to illustrate that the state can never be the messiah. So in chapter 5, from God's perspective, no mere human can fulfill the demands of the book of the Old Testament. Look at chapter 5, verses 1-2:

1 And I saw in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne a scroll written inside and on the back, sealed with seven seals. 2 Then I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the scroll and to loose its seals?"

Is there anyone who can open the scroll and loose its seals by claiming to fulfill it? Verse 3 says that prior to Jesus, the answer is “No.” Verse 3 says, “no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or to look at it.” The Old Testament required perfection. No one was up to that perfection. And in this vision, John is deeply moved. In verse 4 he says, “So I wept much, because no one was found worthy to open and read the scroll, or to look at it.”

5 So one of the elders says to me, “Stop weeping! Look! The Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the scroll and its seven seals.” 6 And I looked, and behold, in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as though it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent out into all the earth. 7 Then He came and took the scroll out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne.

So Jesus is the only one who can claim to fulfill the Old Testament. He is the only one qualified to open the canon and to add to the Old Testament (as many Old Testament verses had prophesied Messiah would do). He is the only one qualified to sit on the throne of the universe. And from chapter 5 on, Jesus rules in history and brings judgments in history and advances his kingdom through historical events.

So chapters 4-5 are the introduction to the the seven seals. If Jesus is bringing those seal judgments, then we ought not to mourn that things are out of control. God is training people over and over to hate statism. Just like some cat trainers will put the cats nose in its poop to make it learn to go outside, not inside, God is making humans taste the bitter consequences of trusting the civil government to solve their problems. It is a beast. It is not a savior. As the title of Robert’s book on Romans 13 words it, “Tyrants are not Ministers of God.” They are ministers of Satan. But in this book, Satan and demons can only go so far. Ultimately they are pawns in God’s hands.

But this book is not only about what *Christ* does. God uses *means*; He uses *angels and humans* to advance His cause, and one of the many purposes for writing Revelation was to give the church a spiritual war manual. This book teaches us how to engage in spiritual warfare. Obviously I can’t demonstrate chapter by chapter how this is the case. But you will see God stirring up the church to pray and to call down God’s fire upon His enemies. When the church refuses to pray the imprecatory Psalms, they cannot expect imprecations to happen. God involves us as His agents. And the two C sections give the church confidence that it can win these battles if we will be dedicated to God’s cause and God’s methods.

Chapter 7 is a beautiful description of the Christian Green Berets of the first century who fearlessly advanced Christ’s Lordship in every area of life, come what may. God protected some and He gave others the privilege of martyrdom. But even martyrs are called overcomers in this book. Their lives were not wasted. Everyone who is born of God overcomes the world, and this is the victory that overcomes the world - even our faith. So when you understand the structure of the book and that each section of this book has an introduction that keeps our eyes on Jesus and His victory, it makes the darkness of this world not so formidable. This is a powerful book that instills hope and faith and commitment to the brethren, where we have each other’s back and see the enemy as out there.

The two D sections - more judgments on Israel and Rome (8-11; 15:2-16:17)

Both D sections start with the same victorious attitude of the saints. Yes they are facing horrendously troubled times, but chapter 15:2 says that each of the saints has the victory over the beast. They already have it. And in faith they sing,

Great and marvelous are Your works, O Lord God, the Almighty! Just and true are Your ways, O King of the nations! 4 Who could not fear You, O Lord, and glorify Your name? Because You alone are holy, because all the nations will come and do obeisance before You, because Your righteous judgments have been manifested.

And what do their faith-filled prayers produce? They produce the seven awesome bowls of judgment. Well the same is true in the first D section. If you look at chapter 8, the first 6 verses constitute the introduction. They are the prayers of the saints. And immediately as a result of those prayers, the seven trumpet judgments are produced. So there are clear thematic parallels between the two D sections, even though they deal with their own unique judgments. But let's read 8:1-6 to get a little feel for how God crafted this book to make us view troubled times. Chapter 8:1-6.

8:1 And when He opened the seventh seal there was silence in heaven for about half an hour. 2 And I saw the seven angels who stood before God, and seven trumpets were given to them. 3 And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer. He was given lots of incense so that he could offer it with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar that is before the throne. 4 And the smoke of the incense with the prayers of the saints went up before God out of the angel's hand. 5 Then the angel took the censer, filled it with fire from the altar, and threw it at the earth. And there were voices and thunders and lightnings and an earthquake. 6 And the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to trumpet.

Several passages in Revelation and in the rest of Scripture link our prayers to the ability of angels to work. The angels in Daniel 9 and 10 were at warfare *because of Daniel's prayer*. In Daniel 9:22-23 the angel says that he was sent because of the prayer. The angels in Revelation 8 are made to wait silently until the incense goes up with the prayers of the saints. These angels are itching to go into battle, but until the incense goes up, there is silence on their part. It is only after prayer that they sound their trumpets and regiment after regiment of angels goes forth. Weak as the church might think of themselves under persecution, if we are willing to pray according to God's will (which means according to the Scriptures - including the imprecatory Psalms), then our prayers would be just as powerful. They would be mixed with Christ's prayers, and the Father always hears Christ's prayers.

Again, I can't get into all the details of the judgment portions of these two D sections, but in the Revelation series I gave boatloads of documentation that all of these prophesied judgments were fulfilled to a T and did indeed fall on Rome and Israel. Just quickly looking at chapter 8:

The first trumpet (in verse 7) was sounded on September 8 of the Feast of Trumpets when Cestius' 12th Legion came through Israel with his 35,000 soldiers. In our series we looked not only at the fire and blood caused by his troops (which is what most preterists focus on), but we looked at the miraculous fire that fell from heaven and the literal hail and blood that

fell out of the sky at the same time. Was this symbolic of what was soon to fall upon Israel and Rome? Yes. But those symbols literally happened.

The second trumpet happened on September 22, when a huge asteroid streaked overhead and fell into the Mediterranean, creating a massive wave that destroyed ships, heating up the water and producing a red tide, and when it hit the ocean floor, starting a chain reaction of earth movements.

The third trumpet in verses 10-11 happened on September 28. It too was a meteorite that hit what we now know as Lake Ram, and poisoned exactly 1/3 of the waters of Israel - the Jordan Aquifer. Lake Ram is only connected to the Jordan Aquifer, one of the three aquifers in Israel. The Roman historians spoke of this poisoning being of the Jordan Aquifer.

Now, I will point out that so many commentators take these trumpets out of order, but they are all in sequence. The fourth trumpet happened on October 15. It happened in sequence after the others. There were literal signs in the heavens, just as the text says. But they symbolized something. 1/3 of the sun being darkened (which literally happened) symbolized the fact that 1/3 of Cestius' Roman army would soon be wiped out. Back then the sun was the symbol for the Roman leadership. And within a few months of this book being written, Cestius' army was indeed routed by the Jews and he had to flee in disgrace. Who would ever have imagined that happening to Rome? The moon symbolizes a vassal ruler, and 1/3 of the moon being darkened symbolized 1/3 of Herod Agrippa's Jewish army being destroyed in battle. And you can see an Agrippa coin in your handouts that symbolizes Agrippa with a moon. In my series on Revelation I pointed out that you don't need to pit literal against symbolic. Literal symbols still symbolize. But they are historical events. And by the way, God seems to love to put these kinds of symbols even into modern history. I have looked at some of the major geopolitical changes in the last 4000 years and have seen celestial signs often preceding them. Could it be coincidence? Yes, but I tend not to think so. Of course, only the Bible's interpretation of such things would be infallible, not the signs themselves. But it is interesting that they happen.

Chapter 9 shows a massive unleashing of demons out of the abyss. And there were a lot of historical evidences and applications to spiritual warfare that we looked at. But to have millions or billions of demons unleashed upon a nation is a disconcerting thing. In chapter 9:13-21 there is another army of 100 million demons being brought from the Euphrates River to Israel. In the New King James it says 200 million, but the Majority Text has 100 million, and I follow the Majority Text. In any case, those demons accompanied humans. And we saw that all the pictures of these demons are the exact same pictures of the gods of these legions that they had on their standards and shields. They worshiped demons and were controlled by demons. All of this can be extremely disconcerting - until you realize that the book of Revelation says that these demons cannot go one step beyond what God allows them to go. *God Himself* releases the demons from the Euphrates in chapter 9:15. And the message is comforting - *God is sovereign over even Satan and his hosts*. And nothing can thwart God's plans. God wants the readers of Revelation to have faith and to stand fast.

There are two parallel interludes as part of Revelation's structure. And I don't have time to get into those interludes, but they form an important bridge. It's a beautifully woven together book.

But we will move on to the introduction to the second D section is chapter 15:2-8 where the spiritual warfare of the church is once again tightly connected to the spiritual warfare of the angels. And their prayers unleash the seven bowls. These go backwards from the final judgment on Israel in AD 136 that the central section ended with. (We haven't looked at the central section yet.) But if you understand the historical progress in the first half up to the final destruction of Israel in AD 136 in the pinnacle of the book and then going backwards in history, you have a general picture of what God is doing.

And why was the Bar Kochba rebellion even included in the book or allowed? It ended up being far, far worse than anything that happened in AD 70. Why a further judgment? And the answer is simple. Israel did not learn from the AD 70 destruction of their capitol, Jerusalem. Though forbidden from entering that city after AD 70, Israel continued to rage against God and against Christians, pronouncing blasphemies against Jesus and severely persecuting Christians. I document the enormous persecution and hatred that the Jews poured out upon Christians and why these bowl judgments were absolutely needed.

So the second D section of chapters 15-16 fills out the picture of the first D and shows that judgments continued to be poured out upon Israel even after AD 70. We looked at the detailed fulfillments of these, and I can't get into them today. But they were astounding. The sea of Galilee was so full of blood that it coagulated into a putrefying sewer. No fish survived. History tells us that every river and every spring was polluted with blood. Though modern historians think it is impossible, *ancient* witnesses say that 80 million Jews died. I have no idea how many died in reality, but there is no reason to take any of the Biblical details as hyperbole. God controls the earthquakes, meteorites, water, germs, sun, fire, and other events for His kingdom purposes. And none of us can die one day sooner than God wills. And God can make us more than conquerors in life and in death.

I'll just for sake of time, look at one of these bowls - the fifth bowl in verses 10-11. It says,

10 Then the fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the Beast, and his kingdom was plunged into darkness; so they gnawed their tongues because of the pain. 11 And they blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains, and because of their ulcers; yet they did not repent of their deeds.

Wow! No matter what punishments are afflicted on humans, they will not repent apart from God's grace. These chapters are such a vivid description of human depravity. But let's look at the sign itself.

This is a prophecy of Mount Vesuvius, which ended up being a judgment on Rome itself. Keep in mind that this book speaks of judgments on *both* Rome and Israel. Too many partial preterists focus only in Israel, but all nations are subject to God's laws and subject to His judgments. Rome was no exception. America is no exception.

Anyway, in AD 80, there was a solar eclipse, then the two eruptions of Mount Vesuvius, with supernatural beings being seen around it, and with the eruption completely blotting out the sun turning Italy into deep, deep darkness. And that darkness extended out over

Africa and other continents. The second eruption of that volcano is thought by scientists to have unleashed 100,000 times the thermal energy of the Hiroshima-Nagasaki bombings. Scientists who have studied both the history and deposits at Pompeii and Herculaneum say that the second blast produced a dense, rolling, ground-hugging mass of lethal gas, ash, and rock - basically a pyroclastic flow that must have had temperatures reaching up to 1830°F. Those closer to Vesuvius would have been killed instantly, with brains boiling and skulls exploding in a flash. Skeletal remains show bodies further out burned to the bone in seconds.

And by the way, this was also prophesied to happen in Zechariah 14:12, where God promised *this* to the Gentile soldiers who would fight against Jerusalem in AD 70: He promised “Their flesh shall dissolve while they stand on their feet, their eyes shall dissolve in their sockets, and their tongues shall dissolve in their mouths.” This literally happened since Titus’ legion that had fought against Jerusalem just happened to be on vacation at the famous Roman resorts in Campania and they all perished along with other Roman and Jewish dignitaries.

Those closest to the volcano did not really suffer much. It was a quick death. Those further away from the pyroclastic flow were scalded badly, many dying much later after a great deal of suffering. Those even further away were scalded, but did not die.

But the judgments didn’t stop with Mount Vesuvius. There was a massive fire that burned down the city of Rome.

And it didn’t even stop there. This was a year of *enormous* calamities upon the entire Roman empire. The Roman historian, Tacitus, says, “Italy was prostrated by disasters either entirely novel, or that recurred only after a long succession of ages.” (Tacitus, *Histories, Prefacio* 1.2) One of those disasters was a very strange disease. Within weeks or months of Vesuvius erupting the entire empire experienced the worst disease epidemic in Rome’s history to that time, causing great pain and anguish and killing an estimated 10,000 people a day. So that is a broad overview of the historical background to these C & D sections. They were all fulfilled, and even the sequences within these sections match history perfectly.

The central E section - the church’s victorious advance (Rev. 12-14).

But that brings us to the center of the chiasm, which is chapters 12-14. Everyone agrees that chapter 12 backs up to AD 30 and then moves forward. It’s the broad overview. I believe that it moves forward to the end of Israel in AD 136 and then declares the victory of the Gospel going worldwide after that.

And chapter 12 is the introduction to this section and is itself formed as a chiasm, with verses 10-11 being the heart of the book and really, the key to Revelation as a whole. Those two verses say,

10 And I heard a loud voice in the heaven saying: “Now the salvation and the power have come, even the Kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ, because the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accused them before our God day and night. 11 And they conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not cherish their lives, even up to death.

Verses 10-11 show a victory which had been achieved in heaven and on earth, and it describes this victory in a way that might seem puzzling to those who do not have eyes of faith. It might seem puzzling first of all because it seems to onlookers as if Satan is winning - as if the church has almost been annihilated. Apart from the eyes of faith it might have looked like anything but victory.

And it might have seemed puzzling secondly because verses 7-9 attribute the victory to Michael and his angels (it is after all warfare in heaven). Yet verse 11 attributes this victory to the saints on earth. In fact, the Greek for “they” in verse 11 is an emphasized “they” that some versions have translated as “they themselves overcame him...” It is attributing the stupendous victory of verses 7-9 over Satan and his angels to these weak saints on earth. How could that be? One commentary vividly describes the striking language this way:

That’s the puzzle in this passage, because a decisive victory has been won, but it seems that two quite different groups of people have been involved in winning it. There is ‘war in heaven’—an alarming enough concept; Michael, the great archangel of Daniel 10, summons all his angels to fight against the dragon and his angels...

But wait a minute. The song of victory which follows this great event gives credit for the victory, not to Michael, but to God’s people on earth. ‘They conquered him’, says the loud voice from heaven, ‘by the blood of the lamb and by the word of their testimony, because they did not love their lives unto death’ (verse 11). So who defeated the dragon? Was it Michael, or was it the martyrs?

Well, in a sense it was both. The heavenly reality of the victorious battle is umbilically joined to the earthly reality of the martyrs’ deaths...²

What a vivid image - this commentator says that there is an umbilical cord that joins the angels and the saints on earth and which empowers both in this spiritual warfare. Both must be involved if spiritual warfare is to be won. So you have been seeing this common theme throughout the whole book. It is after all a training manual in spiritual warfare. Every introduction to every section shows Christ the king using weak vessels like us to advance His kingdom. And by the time you get to this section of the book, you recognize that.

It is not the angels that empower Christians or the Christians that empower angels; it is Christ who empowers both. The umbilical cord of both is really connected to Christ. He is the source of 100% of their life and victory. Yes, verse 10 alludes to the angelic war, but what was it that was the means or the cause of the angels’ victory? *Christ’s* salvation, *Christ’s* power, *Christ’s* kingdom, and *Christ’s* authority. They couldn’t have won without those four things. Nor can we. Yes, verse 11 says that believers on earth *themselves* overcame, but how did they do it? They did it by the blood of the Lamb, by Christ’s Word on their lips, and by dying to self and living solely to Christ. Ultimately the warfare is Christ working through us. And we saw this Christ-centered focus right from the beginning of the book, haven’t we?

² Tom Wright, *Revelation for Everyone, For Everyone Bible Study Guides* (London; Louisville, KY: SPCK; Westminster John Knox, 2011), 111–112.

Angels could not have won this victory without Christ's prior victory in AD 30. Believers could not have won this victory without Christ's shed blood conquering Satan in AD 30. That's when the victory was achieved legally.

So the chapter as a whole shows a great battle that occurred in the heavenlies between Satan and his angels and Michael and his angels. And this somehow corresponds to a spiritual battle being waged by humans. That is the introduction to Section E. That victory enables Christians to stand up against all odds.

And what were the odds? Very briefly, they are three demonic rulers who do everything in their power to destroy Christianity. The first demonic ruler is the dragon (Satan) who tries to destroy the remnant. What a formidable enemy!

Chapter 13 shows the second enemy - the Beast - a fallen "living creature" who possessed Nero and made Nero think of himself as a beast. And later that demon possessed Titus to do the same.

The third demonic enemy is also formidable. And the second half of chapter 13 introduces us to the third formidable demonic enemy - the beast from the land - or the demon that controlled Herod Agrippa II.

But the text indicates that that demon who controlled the politics of Israel, also had two lesser demons, symbolized by the two prophetic horns of this beast that perform miracles and prophesy. And in our series we saw bountiful evidence that these horns controlled the only other two leaders that survived AD 70 in Israel - Josephus and Rabbi Yohannan ben Zakkai. So between the head (Agrippa) and the two horns you have the entire leadership of post-AD-70-Israel that continued the persecution of Christians. All three of them pretended to be lambs (in other words, pretended to serve God), but were in reality breathing dragon's breath. And we saw that both Josephus and Rabbi Yohannan ben Zakkai performed astounding miracles - even calling down fire from heaven. And they gave prophecies that even astounded the skeptics, Vespasian and Titus. Yohannan especially is credited with being the most important rabbi in modern Judaism since he single handedly gave us what we now know to be Talmudism, a demonic religion that has created havoc in the last 2000 years. It purports to be a lamb (to be biblical) but it has the breath of the dragon written all over it. It is occult through and through.

And believe it or not, all three of those leaders of Israel taught the Jews how to worship the Beast with crossed fingers. I explained their reasoning and exactly how they did that.

Yet, even though these demons (and the men whom they controlled) were frightening, God was still growing His church. Chapter 14 shows how God used the 144,000 who had earlier been spared from death in region of Pella for the first half of the war - He used them as His shock troops to spread the Gospel throughout the world. Let me read chapter 14:14-16.

14 And behold, I saw a white cloud, and someone like a son of man sitting on the cloud, having on his head a golden crown and in his hand a sharp sickle. 15 And another angel came out of the temple crying out with a loud voice to the one sitting on the cloud, "Thrust in your sickle and reap, for the time to reap has come because the harvest of the earth is dry." 16 So the one sitting on the cloud swung his sickle upon the earth, and the earth was harvested.

This is speaking of the positive harvest of souls that would continue. It is covenant succession to those who are faithful.

Verses 17-20 then end this section by introducing the harvest of judgment that takes us up to the Bar Kochba rebellion that the second D section will pick up on. This final judgment was needed because Israel was so filled with demons that it would not repent. Indeed, its justification of immorality became famous. I won't go into the rabbinic justifications for gross sexual immorality that became rife in the time between the destruction of the temple and the Bar Kochba rebellion, but it wouldn't take a lot of reading in the Talmud to find out. It's gross. I cannot even speak of it from the pulpit. But the Palestinian Talmud (which tends to be the more conservative of the two Talmuds) summarizes in more discrete language why over 1000 villages were destroyed in Israel. It says, "because of contention... because of witchcraft... because of fornication."^[^7] Those rabbis admitted that witchcraft and fornication were pervasive. The sexual slide into the sewers that happened in Israel is a pretty sure indicator that a nation may be teetering on the edge of destruction.

And verse 20 says, "And the winepress was trampled outside the city, and blood came out of the winepress up to the horses' bridles, for a thousand six hundred stadia." This was precisely fulfilled in AD 136. Notice that the bloodshed was only outside the city. That doesn't fit AD 70 at all. But it does fit AD 136. Jews had not been allowed in Jerusalem since AD 70, so there was no bloodshed there. But outside the city, the blood flowed freely. The Palestinian Talmud in Gittin 57b claims that 80,000,000 Jews were killed by the Romans. But Roman historians say that the Roman armies lost so many soldiers that they had to recruit teenagers to keep the battle going. So Rome lost a lot as well.

Almost no one believes the various Jewish sources, but all those sources claim to quote rabbis who were there and claim to reflect real history. The Jerusalem Talmud says, the number of Jewish men, women, and children slain at Betar was so enormous that the Romans "went on killing until their horses were submerged in blood to their nostrils" (Ta'anit 4:5 [24a-b]).³ That is almost word-for-word identical to what this prophecy says would happen. Midrash Rabbah 2:4-5 says, "They slew the inhabitants until the horses waded in blood up to the nostrils." One place simply says, "The [Romans] went on killing [Jews] until a horse was sunk in blood up to its nose." (Ta'anit 4:6 [see more in 68d-69a]).⁴ That's a lot of blood. And there are other similar references.

³ As translated by some modern Jews. See for example, <http://www.jewishpress.com/indepth/opinions/the-eternal-jewish-flame/2016/02/05/>

⁴ [NN] Now they kept slaughtering [the Jews] until a horse sunk into blood up to his nose, and the blood would roll boulders weighing forty seahs until the blood flowed four miles into the sea. [OO] Now if you might want to suppose that Betar was near the sea, in fact it was forty miles from the sea." Jacob Neusner, *The Jerusalem Talmud: A Translation and Commentary* (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 2008).

The Jerusalem Talmud goes on to say that the blood flowed for miles to the Mediterranean.⁵ And another place says that the ocean was stained with the blood as far northwest as the island of Cyprus.⁶ Cyprus is almost 200 miles away. How that is possible, I don't know. I'm just recording the only history we have.

One Jewish author summarizes the ancient testimonies this way:

With virtually no survivors, rivers of Jewish blood flowed for miles to the sea, and the Romans were able to fertilize their fields for seven years using their victims' blood. Jewish bodies were not buried, but were used as fences for fields, in a chilling premonition of Nazi practice. Bar Kochba also died, either executed by the sages for making false Messianic claims, or during the final battle for Betar.⁷

Yet another quote by a Jewish scholar:

[they] slaughtered the men, women and children until blood flowed from the doorways and sewers. Horses sank up until their nostrils, and the rivers of blood lifted up rocks weighing forty se'ah [approximately 700 lb.], and flowed into the sea, where its stain was noticeable for a distance ...⁸

Well, if they are right that rocks were lifted up by the flood, it indicates to me that a flash flood may have accompanied the blood flow. This seems to be hinted at by Rabbi Eliezer the Great, who said that the two streams near Betar flowed in two directions, and both streams were running with one part blood and two parts water.⁹ That seems to contradict

⁵ The Babylonian Talmud says, "This refers to the eighty thousand battle trumpets that assembled in the city of Betar when they took it, and men, women, and children did they kill in it, until their blood flowed and fell into the Great Sea." Jacob Neusner, *The Babylonian Talmud: A Translation and Commentary*, vol. 11b (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2011), 473. "...the blood flowed four miles into the sea. [OO] Now if you might want to suppose that Betar was near the sea, in fact it was forty miles from the sea." Jacob Neusner, ed., *The Talmud of the Land of Israel: An Academic Commentary to the Second, Third, and Fourth Divisions*, Accordance Electronic ed. 22 vols.; (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 2005), 69a.

⁶ "His legions surrounded them and killed them. He said to the women, "Obey my legions, and I shall not kill you." They said to him, "What you did to the ones who have fallen do also to us who are yet standing." He mingled their blood with the blood of their men, until the blood flowed into the ocean as far as Cyprus. At that moment the horn of Israel was cut off, and it is not destined to return to its place until the son of David will come." Jacob Neusner, ed., *The Talmud of the Land of Israel: An Academic Commentary to the Second, Third, and Fourth Divisions*, Accordance Electronic ed. 22 vols.; (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 2005), 55b. <https://accordance.bible/link/read/T-YERU-E#39099>

⁷ http://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/2713668/jewish/Bar-Kochba-Revolt.htm

⁸ http://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/144572/jewish/The-Fall-of-Betar.htm

⁹ The Talmud of the Land of Israel says, "It has been taught: R. Eleazar the Great said: There are two streams in the valley of Yadain, one running in one direction and one in another,

other testimonies that make the flow pure blood, but the histories are sparse. And they are not infallible anyway.

But here is the point - for people to claim that there is no historical evidence of the fulfillment of these verses, I would say that the *only* historical evidence (however much you may doubt those histories - the only historical evidence that we have) shows that it was fulfilled to a "t." I give a lot more details in my series.

We might wish that the central section ended up on the positive note of verse 16 - a note of the constant growth of the kingdom. The book itself ends with peace and victory and the success of the Gospel. But here's the point - the saints to whom this book was written were not at the end of history. We aren't there either. We are still living in a time when Christians are being persecuted, and the central section ends on a note of realism. You cannot hide your head in the sand about the fact that persecution is always on the increase when evangelism is successful. Demons fight back. And there may still be many tough times ahead. But the message of this book is that with Christ at our side, we can overcome demons by the word of our testimony and by the blood of the Lamb. Whether in life or in death, we need to be willing to face anything to see Christ's kingdom advancing and His glory being lifted up. So we will end by singing a hymn that says, "The Son of God Goes Forth to War." It's refrain asks us if we willing to follow in His train. Are we willing to make the sacrifices required to see His ancient promises fulfilled?

The bottom line of the central E section is that Jesus is victor in history. We aren't waiting for His victory. Whatever defeats we may face, Jesus is always victorious, and He loves to lead the church to victory if the church will only dedicate itself to His cause and have faith in what He provides. May each of us exercise such faith. Amen.

and the Sages estimated that [at that time] they ran with two parts water to one of blood." Jacob Neusner, ed., *The Talmud of the Land of Israel: An Academic Commentary to the Second, Third, and Fourth Divisions*, Accordance Electronic ed. 22 vols.; (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 2005), 55b. The Babylonia Talmud uses the image of "wine," saying, "It has been taught on Tannaite authority: R. Eliezer the Great says, "There are two streams in the Valley of Hands, one of them flows in this direction, the other in that direction, and sages made the estimate that they ran with two parts of water to one of wine.'" Jacob Neusner, *The Babylonian Talmud: A Translation*

